

EVERETT COMMUNITY STREETS INITIATIVE TASK FORCE
DRAFT PROBLEM STATEMENT

This Task Force was convened by Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson to “foster a vibrant and healthy community . . . [by] better understand[ing] the street-level social issues in Everett’s commercial core areas and identify[ing] potential short- and long-term actions for the community to address those issues.” **The Task Force identified the following street-level social issues to be of greatest concern:**

- Street disorder: behaviors such as aggressive panhandling, loitering, vandalism, public intoxication, urination and defecation, drug dealing; bizarre, unpredictable, disoriented or disturbing conduct and speech; littering, including alcoholic beverage containers and hypodermic needles; and sleeping, lying, sitting, and storing personal belongings on sidewalks, in alleys and on other public and private property.
- Criminal conduct (in addition to the above): shoplifting, car prowls, theft and miscellaneous other crimes.
- Visible street homelessness
- Mental illness and addiction problems suffered by many on the streets

Task Force members and other community stakeholders and members of the public expressed the following **concerns arising from or related to these street-level social issues:**

- The quality of life, attractiveness of the area, and vitality of business activity in the City’s commercial core areas are adversely affected
- Public safety in commercial core areas is perceived by many to be diminished Many individuals on the street appear to be experiencing untreated or inadequately treated mental illness; there is concern that mental illness is contributing to some of the negative impacts in the area and concern for the well-being of the individuals experiencing mental illness
- Similar concerns exist with respect to individuals with chemical dependency issues (and a recognition that chemical dependency and mental illness often co-occur)
- Related specifically to homeless individuals in the commercial core areas: concern for individuals experiencing homelessness; concern that visible street homelessness in the commercial core areas make those areas less attractive to shoppers and residents; and concerns related to the complex relationship between homelessness, poverty, mental illness, drug addiction, and crime.

The Task Force identified a number of **constraints and obstacles to addressing these issues and concerns:**

- Insufficient funding and service capacity to provide the treatment, housing and other services required to successfully address these issues.
- Insufficient policing staffing to increase presence in commercial core areas
- Traditional criminal justice and law enforcement responses, while are appropriate for many, are often ineffective, inappropriate, and too expensive to deal with street level social issues --but alternatives to the traditional system are currently limited.
- Unintended negative impacts on neighborhoods and businesses caused by services intended to respond to street level social issues.
- Lack of public understanding of some of underlying causes and complexity of the issues

- Lack of communication and coordination among social service providers, government agencies, businesses and residents
- Those in need lack the information about where to get help, and may lack the capacity to help themselves